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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 8 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I wish to draw your attention to a grave escalation of provocative cross-border attacks by the terrorist organization Hizbullah, which pose an imminent risk to the lives of civilians and the safety of communities in northern Israel. Accompanied by ever more virulent and vehement threats of terror, such attacks point to a serious threat posed by Hizbullah, with the support of Lebanon, Syria and Iran, to stability along the northern border.

This morning, 8 August 2003, Hizbullah terrorists opened a massive artillery attack on northern Israel. During two hours of shelling, mortars, missiles, Katyusha rockets and rounds from automatic weapons were fired across the Blue Line from Lebanon. Shells hit communities in Rosh Hanikra, on the north-west coast of Israel, and eastern positions in the Har Dov and Hermon regions, causing significant structural damage, and traumatizing the local residents. Shells also hit the towns of Masadeh and Majdal Shams, destroying homes in the area.

On Sunday, 3 August 2003, Hizbullah terrorists fired missiles across the Blue Line from Lebanon, injuring a civilian in the northern Israeli town of Even Menahem. These missiles also caused serious structural damage to a kindergarten and a home. All seven members of the resident family were treated for shock. Missile salvos also landed on a number of communities in the western Galilee area of Israel. It is only by sheer luck that the number of casualties from these acts of aggression was not higher.

This latest escalation in Hizbullah attacks confirms that the terrorist organization, and its sponsoring States, continue to seek to destabilize the region, despite Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon over three years ago, in full and confirmed compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). As Israel has repeatedly indicated in letters to the Secretary-General, and in meetings with United Nations officials, rather than agree to fulfil its obligations under the norms of international law and the provisions of resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310

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(2000), 1337 (2001) and 1373 (2001), which call for the restoration of international peace and security, the return of the effective authority of the Government of Lebanon in the south, and the prevention of cross-border terrorist attacks, the Government of Lebanon has effectively relinquished control of South Lebanon to the terrorist organization Hizbullah.

Hizbullah has proved itself, time and again, to be an enemy of peace, supporting and perpetrating terrorist activities worldwide. The organization is once again seeking to escalate tensions in the area of the Blue Line by purposefully and systematically carrying out numerous unprovoked cross-border attacks endangering both Israeli and Lebanese citizens, in clear violation of the Blue Line as established by the United Nations.

These incidents follow a series of malicious and aggressive statements issued by the leadership of Hizbullah, including Hassan Nasrallah, in recent weeks, inciting members of the organization to continue to perpetrate acts of terror against Israelis. In a statement on 27 June 2003, Nasrallah advocated tactics of blackmail to achieve his terrorist aims, warning that his group will resume the capture of Israelis. "I pledge to work day and night to have in (our) possession new Israeli captives", he added. This statement, together with Hizbullah's continuing support for and promotion of acts of global terrorism, serves to illustrate the violent nature of Hizbullah, and its continuing threat to the peace and security of the region.

The fact that this notorious terrorist organization, which brazenly advocates suicide terrorism against Western targets, and possesses a demonstrated record of terrorist activity, still enjoys public and express support, including the provision of funding, training and military assistance from the Governments of Lebanon, Syria and Iran, cannot be tolerated by the international community as it pursues its global campaign against terrorism. The steadfast refusal to suppress Hizbullah and to ensure effective control of the south as required by Security Council resolutions and international law is the cause of instability in the area, and risks causing a serious escalation of tensions in South Lebanon and in the greater Middle East.

In light of this ongoing and grave failure, Israel has no option but to take the necessary measures to protect its citizens, until Lebanon and Syria, the power broker and the occupying force in Lebanon, and whose representative is paradoxically this month's President of the Security Council, live up to their obligations as responsible members of the international community. Israel once again calls on the international community to expect no less than full compliance.

The present letter is a follow-up to previous letters concerning the dangerous situation in South Lebanon caused by the illegal attacks perpetrated by Hizbullah across the Blue Line.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 160, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative